

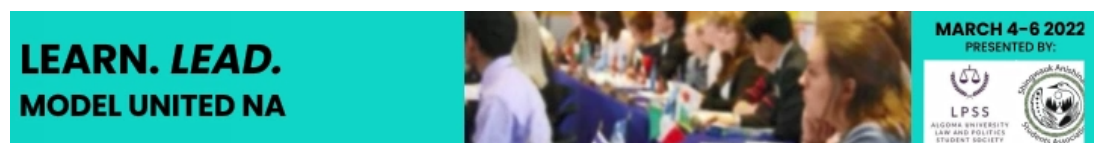
Downtown Plaza receives extra money from Council

By **Dan Gray** - December 14, 2021 @ 10:09 am



Although three councillors, Matt Shoemaker, Matt Scott and Marchi Bruni voted against the extra spending, the city is set to spend more on the plaza.

This time, the funds are an indirect city spend, through Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, according to the report.



"In recognition of the positive impact the Downtown Plaza will have on the local tourism industry, TSSM has committed \$200,000 over two years of its own funds and recommends that Council approve \$50,000 over two years from the Tourism Development Fund," states the report to council.

Like the added security costs to the downtown, taken from a different line in the city's budget, this is directly for the Plaza, taken from a separate line.

The report calculates this investment may make the city 1.2 million dollars in the end.

"Based on the criteria above, the development of a downtown plaza will complement and enhance our current tourism offerings. Within walking distance of our many attractions, including, but not limited to, the Waterfront Boardwalk, Bondar Pavilion, the Bushplane Museum, Art Gallery of Algoma, Sault Ste. Marie Museum and Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site. the plaza will offer event space and

generate more foot-traffic and spending in the downtown.

Commonly viewed as a trip enhancer, a downtown plaza plays an important role in extending the stay of visitors and increases the dollars spent in the community. Tourism Sault Ste. Marie applies \$150 per visitor day to calculate the economic impact of visitors to the community. While it is more challenging to quantify the economic impact of extended stays, a conservative estimate of would be to attribute \$20.00/visitor day. As an example, in 2019 Sault Ste. Marie attracted 61,000 visitors. Assuming a spend of \$20.00 per visitor would result in an economic impact of \$1,200,000.”

Shoemaker had this item specifically pulled from the consent agenda, so he could vote against it.

“I just like to indicate, Mr. Mayor, that I pulled it because I intend to vote against it. I’ve expressed in the past that I thought that the costs for the Downtown Plaza had increased too much. This is another use of municipal resources while it’s not in city funding directly and so it’s an indirect city fund,” stated Shoemaker. “It’s another example in my opinion of the how the costs on this one have increased beyond what I was prepared to support initially when I approved of what I thought was a good concept. Those are my reasons for voting against this tonight.”

Councillors Gardi, Vezeau-Allen, Hollingsworth, Hilsinger, Niro, Christian, Dufour and Mayor Provenzano voted for the extra spend.

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Dan Gray

A native of Centre Wellington, Ontario, I have worked as a freelance journalist all over the province of Ontario. Most recently I ran a local news page in my hometown of Fergus, Ontario. I look forward to bringing my experience covering breaking news, municipal matters and general interest stories to the team at Superior Media and communities we serve.



